

May 7, 2003

MEMO

TO:

Barry Drucker
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FROM:

William Burton (Program Manager)
Versar, Inc.
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SUBJECT:

Progress report for Contract No. 1435-01-02-CT-85060 "Environmental Investigation of the Use of Shoals Offshore Delaware and Maryland by Mobile Benthos and Finfish Species"

This is the second progress report of the MMS finfish study that summarizes our accomplishments on this contract since the last report submitted in February 2003. Late winter sampling was conducted during the reporting period between March 16th and March 31, 2003. All gill net sets, commercial, and experimental trawling was accomplished without any major problems. Ocean water temperatures were extremely low at the time (about 36°C) and the fish catches in all gears was noticeably lower relative to the late fall 2002 collections. All field data were reviewed and the data were appended to Versar's growing database for the program. Our bio-acoustic subcontractor, Kyle Hartman, from West Virginia University conducted more detailed analyses on the fall 2002 survey data in preparation for spring sampling scheduled for the last week of May 2003. Dr. Hartman indicated that he would need to conduct most of his surveys at night to help discern fish targets from bottom clutter as many of the fish targets were close to the bottom during the daytime surveys last fall. Many fish species move up in the water column at night.

In the next few weeks we will begin gearing up for the late spring survey scheduled to start on the week of May 26, 2003. The bio-acoustic survey will be conducted during the first or second week in June to accommodate a scheduling conflict with Dr. Hartman. While we had hoped to convene a meeting with MMS to discuss preliminary data results before the next seasonal sampling, we would like to re-schedule for sometime after the spring 2003 sampling effort. At that point we will have more information to present and we will have two bio-acoustic surveys to evaluate as well.